

TRIP REPORT:
LIBERIA & KENYA
JULY 2012

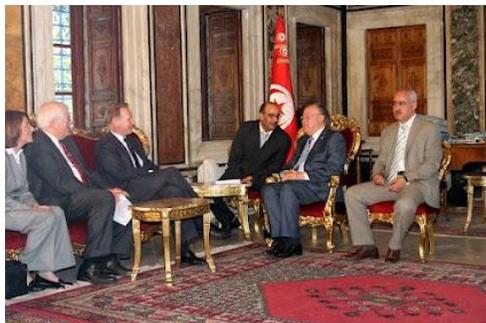


A delegation from the House Democracy Partnership (HDP) traveled to Africa from June 30 to July 9, to renew the commission's partnership with the Liberian Congress and the Kenyan National Assembly, to meet with the constituent assembly in Tunisia, conduct a preliminary assessment of South Sudan's legislature, to conduct a bilateral visit to Madagascar, and briefly visit Morocco. The delegation was led by HDP Chairman David Dreier (R-CA) and Ranking Democratic Member David Price (D-NC) along with Reps. Susan Davis (D-CA), Mike Ross (D-AR), Gwen Moore (D-WI), and Ed Whitfield (R-KY). Mr. Tom Wickham, the Parliamentarian of the House, also joined the delegation. This was HDP's ninth outbound legislative strengthening mission of the 112th Congress and 30th overall since 2005.

The delegation began its mission in Liberia (June 30 to July 2), where it started its program with the Liberian Congress by hosting and attending a town hall meeting held in the district of the Speaker of the Liberian House of Representatives, J. Alex Tyler, in the city of Klay, located in Bomi County. The well-attended town hall included representatives from Liberia's House of Representatives, Liberia's Senate, the Bomi County Superintendent, and the Klay District Commissioner. The representatives answered questions from their constituents and held a working lunch with the U.S.



delegation to discuss constituent relations. The delegation also met with Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf to discuss bilateral relations, U.S. financial assistance to Liberia, and Liberia's development needs (particularly in the area of electrical power). Following their meeting with the president, the delegation met with the leadership of the Liberian House and Senate to discuss their 2009-2013 parliamentary development plan and learn more about the legislature's current needs and plans for the future. Concurrently, congressional staff traveling with the delegation held two trainings for Liberian legislative staff – one focused on committee structure and operations; and one focused on staffing for leadership staff. The Parliamentarian of the House also met with his counterparts in the Liberian Clerk's office to discuss best practices for running a legislative calendar.



On July 3, the delegation held meetings in Tunis, Tunisia focused on the interim leadership of the Tunisian government and the Tunisian Constituent Assembly. The delegation first met with President Moncef Marzouki to discuss the efforts to write a new constitution and human rights and democratization issues. The delegation next visited the National Constituent Assembly where it met

with six of the commission chairs who are working to write a new Tunisian constitution; a separate meeting was held with the President of the Constituent Assembly, Mustapha Ben Jaafar, to discuss the drafting of the constitution and the timeline for its completion. A lunch was held for Members of the Constituent Assembly, where the issue of minority and women's rights was raised in the context of the need for inclusion in the new constitution. The delegation concluded its visit to Tunisia by visiting the U.S. Embassy Independence Day celebration.

The delegation's next stop was Nairobi, Kenya (July 4 to 5) where HDP demonstrated its ongoing commitment to its partnership with the Kenya National Assembly. The visit began with a visit to parliament for a meeting with Deputy Speaker and Chairman of the Liaison Committee, Farah Maalim, and Liaison Committee Members where the institutional priorities of the Kenya National Assembly were discussed.



Reps. Davis and Dreier meet with the Kenyan Rules and Procedure Committee in Nairobi

The vice-chair of the Parliamentary Service Commission then led a meeting with the delegation to discuss the changes to be implemented under Kenya's new constitution ahead of elections expected in March 2013. Among other changes, Kenya is expanding its parliament to include a second body, the Senate, and devolving certain powers to the county-level. For its third meeting in

the parliament, the delegation split into three groups: one met with Members of the Procedures and House Rules Committee; one met with the Public Accounts, Budget, and Finance Committees; and a staff delegation met with the Task Force on the Review of the Standing Orders for the National Assembly/Senate and Projects Implementation Committee to discuss the changes that will be necessary to implement the aforementioned constitutional revisions and ensure that the National Assembly and Senate have defined roles.

The delegation met over lunch with the Kenya Women's Parliamentary Association (KEWOPA), where the number and priorities of women Members of Parliament was discussed, as well as the new constitutional requirement that no more than 2/3 of the National Assembly be of the same gender, potentially creating opportunities for more women to enter politics. The delegation concluded its visit to Kenya with a meeting with Prime Minister Raila Odinga, where the upcoming presidential and parliamentary elections were discussed, as well as the need to ensure a free, fair, and transparent vote free of the violence that marred the 2007 Kenyan national elections.

The delegation next traveled to South Sudan (July 6) to evaluate the parliament of the world's newest nation. The visit began with a meeting at the National Legislative Assembly (NLA) hosted by the Speaker of the NLA, James Wani Igga, who emphasized the longstanding relationship between the U.S. and South Sudan and highlighted the need for more capacity building for the Members and the staff of the NLA. The Deputy Speaker of the Council of States (the upper House of South Sudan's legislature), Remy Oller Itorong, also attended the meeting along with many committee chairs from both bodies. Concurrently, U.S. congressional staff met with Southern Sudanese legislative staff to answer questions and assess the current capacity of the legislative staff.



Reps. Price and Dreier visit with the Speaker of the South Sudanese National Legislative Assembly

The delegation hosted a lunch with the Women's Parliamentarian's Caucus of the National Assembly, where the women MPs discussed ways in which to increase their numbers in the legislature with members of the U.S. delegation, as well as highlighting their legislative priorities. The visit to South Sudan concluded with a meeting with the Legal Advisor to President Salva Kiir, Telar Deng, where the current north-south Sudanese conflict and oil shutdown were discussed, along with executive-legislative relations.

The visit to Madagascar (July 7-8) was focused on encouraging the transitional government to hold elections and return to democracy. The delegation held a courtesy call with the Prime Minister of Consensus, Omer Beriziky, where the emphasis was on the need to hold free, fair, and transparent elections, and respect the people's right to demonstrate without facing indiscriminate violence from the security services. The delegation also met with the President of the Transitional Congress, Mamy Rakotoarivelo, whose party has ceased cooperating with the transitional government over its belief that the current regime has failed to uphold its side of the negotiated agreement. The delegation encouraged Rakotoarivelo to focus on areas of agreement and continue to push for elections. The delegation had the opportunity to meet with a range of Malagasy civil society representatives, including members of the American Chamber of Commerce in Antananarivo and the South African Ambassador to Madagascar, to gain their perspective on the political crisis and its resultant economic impacts. The delegation also met with Peace Corps volunteers working in Madagascar during its visit.

Following Madagascar, the delegation briefly visited Morocco (July 8 to 9) where it met with the U.S. Ambassador to discuss constitutional changes in Morocco in the wake of the Arab Spring.

Overall, the delegation successfully advanced HDP's mission of strengthening democratic institutions abroad and fostering closer ties between the U.S. Congress and key partners. For more information about HDP's programs, please visit <http://democracy.house.gov>.